

be prepared to support a suspension of the certification process with regard to Mexico for the 3 years as requested by President Fox. I would do so because he asks and in the new spirit of cooperation between our two nations. I would be very pleased to work with my colleagues to pass such legislation immediately.

I am not, however, prepared to abandon the process entirely with respect to all countries, as S. 219 would do. There are many places in the world where progress has not been made. Syria, Iran, Burma, and Afghanistan are just a few examples of continuing major problem countries. Only a robust certification process gives Congress and the President the tools we need to encourage change in these nations.

I hope the Senator from Connecticut would work with me on a compromise that would address only Mexico so we can move forward on this issue.

In closing, I again welcome President Fox to the United States. We look forward to working with him in our continuing mutual fight against the drug cartels. I personally, deeply, say thank you and salute this brave and courageous new President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from California for her fine words. It was a superb speech President Fox gave today in joint session.

MAGDALENA MEDIO

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, sometimes one speaks in the Senate Chamber and is not sure what exactly the effect of it all is—maybe more than sometimes.

I am speaking today on behalf of a lot of the human rights workers and social service workers and community development workers, civil society people in Colombia. I am hoping—I will be very straightforward about it; I don't think this is illusion—that the words of a Senator on the floor of the Senate about a priest and about a very important organization, of which two members have been brutally murdered in the last 35, 40 days, communicates a message that our Government cares deeply about human rights in Colombia and about the importance of the Government and the military defending civil society individuals.

I rise today to speak out on behalf of many defenseless human rights workers, social service providers and community economic development workers, in our neighbor Colombia, who are besieged by the growing paramilitary violence in their county. These individuals, some of whom I have come to know personally, all of whom I greatly respect, are heroes for their contributions to democracy and peace in Colombia. They deserve to be heard and to be aided by the United States government.

I have traveled twice to the city of Barrancabermeja, sometimes called "the Sarajevo of Colombia." During those visits, I have come to know the extraordinary and courageous work of a Colombian non-profit program based in a largely rural region of oil refineries, rivers, and mountains. In many hamlets and towns it provides the only hope amidst so much despair.

The Program of Development and Peace of the Magdalena Medio, located in Barranca, is lead by the Jesuit Father Francisco De Roux. The Program's name gives away their mission—sustainable, locally based social and economic development in the context of an inclusive community at peace. They stand for democracy, civil rights, and human rights. They are against the war, and have no enemies in the conflict.

They strive for an inclusive community where disputes are settled by civil authorities and not by armed gangs. They want to provide opportunity for all in their community to work and raise their families in peace and dignity. But paramilitaries are taking over their region and extrajudicial killings are a daily threat.

Recently, they have been beset by tragedy. Two defenseless staff members have been killed and mutilated. Ms. Alma Rosa Jaramillo was a volunteer attorney, a dedicated mother and courageous member of her community. Her dismembered body was found in the community of Morales on July first of this year. On July 17, another brutal assassination took the life of Eduardo Estrada. He was murdered right in front of his family, after a family reunion. He was a respected leader in the community of San Pablo, working as the coordinator of the Program of Development and Peace.

Why are these innocent people, who are doing such good work, being targeted? Lamentably, these are just two more examples of paramilitary impunity in Colombia.

As the Plan Colombia debate has unfolded in the U.S. Senate, we have come to know the terrible reality of the last few decades for the people of Colombia—kidnappings, assassinations, disappearances and terror by the guerrilla and the paramilitary organizations. I am no defender of the guerrilla organizations. They are vicious in their treatment of the civilian population and publicly renounce universally accepted human rights standards.

But the paramilitary organizations, because of their open association with the Colombian military, also must be held to the highest standards of human rights. They cannot be allowed to justify their human rights abuses by equating the laudable civic involvement of those they persecute, with sympathy for the guerrillas. The paramilitary organizations have penetrated ever deeper into Colombian civil society, bringing their terror to communities all across Colombia. In many cases, they do so with the acquiescence

of the Colombian military and government, at the local and even national level.

The Colombian government must find a way to respond to the paramilitary threat. It is a threat to the rights of free speech, free assembly, and moreover, the rule of law in Colombia. We must send a message to all violent actors in Colombia, especially paramilitary groups: "The targeting of the civilian population with murder, extortion, kidnapping, torture and mutilation is unacceptable!"

The United States has an obligation to nurture and defend civil society efforts in Colombia. The Program of Development and Peace of the Magdalena Medio is doing critically important work, helping Colombians find a way out of the labyrinth of war and terror. They need and deserve our thanks and our encouragement; for they represent the future of hope and peace for Colombia.

In my view, a peaceful, prosperous Colombia is a better neighbor and partner of the United States. We must defend these courageous people who daily risk their lives for human rights, democracy and peace. Given our deep involvement in Colombia, we have an opportunity, and a duty, to defend Colombian civil society against the abuses of guerrillas and paramilitaries alike.

Mr. President, I traveled twice to the city of Barrancabermeja, sometimes called the "Sarajevo of Colombia." During the visits, I have come to know a very courageous priest who is in charge of an organization, a nonprofit organization, that does the economic and social development work in a largely rural region of oil refineries, rivers, and mountains. For many hamlets and towns, this organization is the only hope for people.

The name of the organization is the Program of Development and Peace of the Magdalena Medio located in Barranca, led by a Jesuit priest named Francisco de Roux, also called Father Poncho. The program's name gives away its mission. The occupant of the Chair would love it as a businessperson and a Senator from New Jersey. They do the most credible local sustainable economic development work. They stand for democracy, civil rights, and human rights. They are against the war. They are not aligned with the FARC, ELN, or any of the left groups—the paramilitary—and they should have no enemies in this conflict.

This organization has been beset by tragedy. Two defenseless staff members have been killed and mutilated. Ms. Alma Rosa Jaramillo was a volunteer attorney, a dedicated mother and a courageous member of her community. Her dismembered body was found in the community of Morales on July 1 of this year. On July 17, another brutal murder took place. This assassination took the life of Eduardo Estrada. He was murdered right in front of his family after a family reunion. He was a respected leader of the community in

San Pablo, working as the coordinator of the Program of Development and Peace headed up by Father Francisco de Roux.

Why are these innocent people, doing this economic development work—who have done such good work—why are they being targeted? Lamentably, these are just two more examples of paramilitary impunity in Colombia.

I intend for this statement not only to be made on the floor of the Senate, but I hope it is sent out throughout Colombia. As the Plan Colombia debate has unfolded in the Senate, we have come to know the terrible reality of the last few decades for the people of Colombia—kidnappings, assassinations, disappearances, and terror by the guerrilla and paramilitary organizations.

I am no defender of the guerrilla organizations. The FARC and ELN are involved in narcotrafficking up to their eyeballs. They have been vicious in their treatment of the civilian population. They publicly renounce universally accepted human rights standards. But the paramilitary organizations, the AUC, because of their open association, because of their extrajudicial killings and open association, especially at the brigade level with the Colombia military, must be held to the highest standard of human rights. They cannot be allowed to justify their human rights abuses by equating the laudable civic involvement of those they persecute with the sympathy for the guerrillas. The paramilitary organizations penetrated ever deeper into Colombian civil society and brought terror to many of the communities—in many cases, with the acquiescence of the military.

I rise as a U.S. Senator on the floor of the Senate to communicate a message to the Colombian Government that the paramilitary should not be allowed to murder civil society people, defenders of human rights, people doing good work, as the men and women in Father Francisco de Roux's organization do, with impunity. We must send a message to all the violent actors in Colombia, especially the paramilitary groups: The targeting of the civilian population with murder, extortion, kidnapping, torture, and mutilation is unacceptable. Our Government has an obligation to nurture and defend civil society efforts in Colombia. The Program of Development and Peace of the Magdalena Medio is doing critically important work. They need and deserve our thanks and encouragement. They represent hope and peace for Colombia.

Before you came to the chair, Mr. President, I was saying this organization is doing the best, by all accounts, social and economic development work. This priest is beloved and highly respected. Two members of his organization have been brutally murdered in the last 40 days. Their plea, and the plea from many civil society people in Colombia, is: Please, U.S. Government, please U.S. Senate, call on the Govern-

ment and the military and the police to defend us. That is what I am doing. That is supposed to be part of Plan Colombia.

We have a deep involvement in Colombia. Therefore, we have an opportunity and a duty to defend Colombian civil society against the abuses of the guerrillas and the paramilitaries alike. The message needs to be communicated to the military in Colombia that with the Blackhawk helicopters and the military assistance come human rights conditions you have to live up to. Otherwise, we are going to continue to see the murder of innocent people with impunity.

I want this statement to certainly be sent out to Colombia because I want the paramilitary forces and others to know we are paying attention to Father Francisco de Roux and his organization, the Program for Development and Peace, and their work, and that we mean to defend civil society people.

Again, I want to point out that the Colombian Government has an obligation to defend civil society people from the violence both from the guerrilla left and the paramilitary right. Up to date, they have not defended people from violence in Barranca, which I have visited twice now. The paramilitary cut the telephone wires, isolated the people. They have no phone service. They took away their cell phones and moved into their homes. They control the city. With the exception of the bishop and the priest and his organization, and a few others, hardly anybody can speak up any longer without the real risk that they will be murdered.

Francisco de Roux's organization, widely credited for this great economic development work, has had two members—a woman and a man—disemboweled, brutally murdered. It is time for our Government to make clear to the Colombian Government and police and military that they have to defend these civil society people.

UNIONS UNDER SIEGE IN COLOMBIA

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I rise today to also address the disturbing level of violence perpetrated against Colombia's union leaders.

As another Labor Day passes, I could not in good conscience neglect to mention the plight of our brothers and sisters in the Colombian labor movement. There has been a dramatic escalation in violations against them and the response by the Colombian authorities in the face of this crisis has been negligible.

For the past 15 years, Colombia has been in the midst of an undeclared war on union leaders. Colombia has long been the most dangerous country in the world for union members, with nearly 4,000 murdered in that period. Today, three out of every five trade unionists killed in the world are Colombian.

Union members and activists are among the main targets of human rights violations—including murders, disappearances and threats—in the escalating conflict in Colombia. Paramilitary groups, who are linked with Colombian security forces, are responsible for most of these attacks, although guerrilla groups have also targeted activists.

The right-wing AUC has been especially brutal, killing hundreds simply because they view union organizers as subversives. One of the most recent killings occurred on June 21, when the leader of Sinaltrainal, the union that represents Colombian Coca-Cola workers, Oscar Dario Soto was gunned down. His murder brings to seven the number of unionists who worked for Coca-Cola and were targeted and killed by paramilitaries. Earlier this summer, the International Labor Rights Fund and the United Steelworkers of America brought a suit against the Coca-Cola company alleging that the Colombian managers had colluded with paramilitary security forces to murder, torture and silence trade union leaders.

According to a recent New York Times report by Juan Forero, the number of union workers at Coke plants in Colombia has dropped to 450 from 1,300 in 1993. Total Sinaltrainal membership has dropped to 2,400 from 5,800 five years ago.

Regardless of the outcome of this particular legal case, U.S. companies with subsidiaries in Colombia have an obligation to address the upsetting trend of violence against workers, particularly union representatives. It is clear that some companies regularly hire out paramilitary gunmen to intimidate and kill in order to break labor unions. Last year alone, at least 130 Colombian labor leaders were assassinated. Four times as many union workers have been killed this year as during the same time last year. That's more than 80 unionists killed since the beginning of this year.

Colombia, like the United States, guarantees workers a legal right to organize. However, when they do, they face grave threats. This is a serious violation of human rights, under Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Colombian government must take an active role in protecting and ensuring that these rights are enjoyed by all its citizens.

Likewise, the Senate should bear in mind the deteriorating plight of union membership in Colombia before sending additional military aid to a government that can't—or won't—crack down on paramilitary forces.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CARPER). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.